



# Columbia County Department of Health

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## HEALTH DEPARTMENT URGES RESIDENTS TO HELP IN RESPONSE TO H1N1 INFLUENZA VIRUS

Columbia County Health Department is urging people worried about the new flu virus H1N1 to avoid calling 9-1-1 unless they have a true emergency, or going to hospitals and doctors' offices unless they really need treatment. Do not rush to your doctor or hospital emergency room to get flu vaccine. Because this is a new virus, there is no effective vaccine at the present time. It will take at least six months to produce a vaccine that could protect you against the new virus. Last season's flu vaccine will not help against this flu strain. Also, if this virus turns out to spread person-to-person, and you go to a health care facility, you will be at increased risk of exposure to people who are already ill.

The New York State Health Department and the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) are investigating to determine how people who are infected with the new strain of flu contracted the illness, and whether any had a travel history. However, confirmation of the new flu strain coincides with an unusual occurrence of influenza-like illness in the region so it is prudent to reduce the amount of time you spend in public places.

Most flu patients can be cared for at home with supportive treatment to reduce their temperature and maintain an adequate fluid intake. However, children should not be given aspirin to reduce pain or fever because it could cause a rare but potentially serious condition called Reye's Syndrome.

**Flu patients who have difficulty breathing or who suffer dehydration do require medical intervention.** Parents should be aware that children can become dehydrated in a short amount of time. Things to be concerned about are dry mouth and tongue; lack of tears, dark circles or sunken eyes, decreased urine output and lethargy (extreme drowsiness or pronounced lack of interest). If these circumstances occur, call your health care provider. Call 9-1-1 if your healthcare provider cannot be reached.

For information on caring for a flu patient at home, visit [www.nyhealth.gov](http://www.nyhealth.gov) or [www.columbiacountyny.com](http://www.columbiacountyny.com) or call 828-3358 ext.1247. Take measures, as well, to reduce your risk of getting infected.

- If you are caring for someone with flu, keep the person away from others in the home. Limit the amount of time you spend in close contact with the ill person and wear a mask during this time.
- Wash your hands frequently using soap and hot water. If you are not near a sink, use a waterless hand rub.

- Keep your hands away from your mouth, nose or eyes.
- Use a disinfectant on surfaces the patient has contacted.
- Make sure you get sufficient rest and exercise, and eat well. This will help to enhance your immune system.

To help protect others, always cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, and discard it appropriately. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into the bend of your arm—not your hand. This will prevent germs from being transmitted to surfaces such as desktops, railings and doorknobs.

To date, no flu cases have been reported in Columbia County. Similar cases have been reported in other areas of the state.